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ADVISORY

To: All Certified EMTs, Licensed Ambulance Services, EMS training providers
From: Louise Goyette, Director, DPH/OEMS
Paul Petrone, OTR/L, Chairman, Board of Allied Health Professions
Re: Massachusetts Requirements for Being an Athletic Trainer
Date: May 8, 2002

We are aware of some confusion in the field about being an athletic trainer. Specifically, we have heard that some emergency medical technicians (EMTs) believe that by virtue of their certification as an EMT or paramedic alone, they can work as an athletic trainer. This is not the case. Athletic trainers are separately licensed. **Only individuals licensed as athletic trainers by the Board of Registration of Allied Health Professions (Board) may use the title "athletic trainer."** What follows is a summary of the Massachusetts requirements for athletic trainers:

- **Legal governance; licensing; regulatory oversight:** Athletic trainers are licensed under Massachusetts General Laws chapter 112, sections 23A through 23F, and 23K through 23O, and must meet regulatory requirements set by the Board of Registration of Allied Health Professions, at 259 Code of Massachusetts Regulations 4.0. The Board sets standards of education, practice and licensure of athletic trainers and ensures that only qualified, licensed practitioners provide the services in their scope of practice to the public. Under M.G.L. c. 112, § 23N, no one may use the title, "athletic trainer" who is not licensed as such by the Board.
- **Athletic Trainer Education:** To be licensed, athletic trainers must have graduated from a college or university program accredited by the Committee on Accreditation for Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). They must have passed a national exam and, as already noted, have been licensed by the Board.
- **Scope of Practice:** M.G.L., c.112, s. 23A defines athletic training as "the application of principles, methods and procedures of evaluation and treatment of athletic injuries, preconditioning, conditioning and reconditioning of the athlete through the use of appropriate preventative and support devices,

temporary splinting and bracing, physical modalities of heat and cold, massage, water, electrical stimulation, sound, exercise and exercise equipment, under the direction of a physician." Specific examples of acts that athletic trainers are authorized to do include taping, evaluating athletic injuries, and making decisions about whether an athlete is fit to return to play after an injury.

- **Medical Direction:** Athletic trainers must work under the direction of a licensed physician or dentist. Athletes may be referred to an athletic trainer by their own physician or athletic training services may be provided under the direction of a team physician.

As you know, the certification, training and scope of practice for EMTs is very different. EMTs are certified by the Department of Public Health pursuant to M.G.L. c. 111C and the Department's Emergency Medical Services System regulations at 105 CMR 170.000. Massachusetts EMTs' scope of practice is defined by their level of training and certification pursuant to the regulations, and the Statewide Treatment Protocols. As one example of their different roles, an EMT working at a high school athletic event provides emergency treatment to an injured or ill athlete, and makes a decision about whether the athlete needs to be transported to a hospital for further care. The EMT **does not** make a decision about whether or not an athlete can return to play after an injury or illness – that is the athletic trainer's responsibility.

Again, current certification as an EMT does not qualify a person to practice as an athletic trainer.

For more information about working as an athletic trainer, or to check an athletic trainer's license, call the Board at (617) 727-3071, or visit the Board's website, at www.state.ma.us/reg/boards/ah.